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## Deep Breathing and Downward Dog: Supporting Students with an EBD through Yoga

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# Deep Breathing and Downward Dog: Supporting Students with an EBD through Yoga

By

Rachel A. Coates; B.A.; B.S.W.

MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the  
School of Social Work  
St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas  
in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Social Work

Committee Members  
Kendra D. Garrett, Ph. D, LICSW, Chair  
Heather Alden, MSW, LICSW  
Katie Kenefick, RYT

The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research project was to explore how school social workers are utilizing yoga as an intervention for youth who have an emotional/behavioral disorder (EBD). This research project was qualitative in design and seven school social workers from Minnesota were interviewed. Participants interviewed were school social workers from Minnesota that discussed how yoga was being used in schools to increase mind-body awareness and self-regulation among youth who have an emotional/behavioral disorder. Six themes emerged from the data including: normalizing yoga, benefits, yoga curriculum, feedback, barriers, and suggestions. Previous research has indicated that yoga is beneficial not only for the physical body, but for the mind as well, was found in the findings. The findings suggest the need for further research to be conducted relating to altering the use of yoga as an intervention in a more systematic way as well as how to adapt the yoga interventions to meet the needs of the group.

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### Deep Breathing & Downward Dog: Supporting Students with an EBD through Yoga

The National Institute of Mental Health reported that between 10-15% of youth are affected by an emotional or behavioral disorder (EBD) (National Institute of Mental Health, 2009). Due to the continuum of individualized needs and support for youth with an EBD, an integrative and eclectic approach to interventions could help students utilizing special education services (Farmer, 2013). Working with children and adolescents today requires an innovative approach that meets the mental, emotional, and physical needs of youth, as well as the adults who work with them (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). School-based mental health professionals provide crucial work for the comprehensive system of services that are available to help meet the needs of all youth with emotional or behavioral disorder (Farmer, 2013). School social workers play a unique role in the school system, which involves working and implementing interventions for youth who have an EBD (Rippey, 2008).

There has been an increase in the need for individualized interventions for youth with an EBD in order to meet the needs of each child or adolescent. A child or adolescent with an emotional or behavioral disorder often present intensive needs in school that require school staff to be highly trained in order to support learning (Cancio et al., 2014). Increasingly, school staff members are looking at alternative interventions to utilize for youth who have an EBD to help support a positive learning environment while meeting the needs of each student. The school staff team may be challenged to provide disciplinary and instructional accommodations for students who have an EBD (Gresham, 2015). However, yoga may be an innovative alternative intervention for youth who have an EBD.

**Opportunity for yoga with children**

“In challenging times, new opportunities of growth arise” (Gillen & Gillen, p. 17, 2007). The prospect of utilizing yoga with children or adolescents integrates a balanced approach to addressing stressors and the well-being for youth who have an EBD.

Previous research has indicated many advantages of using yoga with youth including the development of social/emotional awareness and skills, fostering physical fitness, and promoting relaxation and self-regulation skills (Gillen& Gillen, 2007).

Current research has shown that yoga has also provided many positive benefits in adults. More recently, the practice of yoga has been used with children and adolescents (Steiner, et.al, 2013). For example, the Yoga Calm® curriculum has been used in many schools across the United States to assist youth in the development of social/emotional awareness and skills, to promote physical fitness, to increase concentration and self-control skills, and to enhance the overall well-being of students who have an EBD (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). Although integrating yoga for children in the school system has been shown to have many positive benefits for youth, it is still in the early stages of evidence-based application and research. The challenges stem from the delivery of yoga to youth as well as how school social workers can effectively integrate yoga into the school system.

**Gaps in current research relating to youth yoga**

The majority of previous research relating to adult yoga has shown positive benefits however, research on youth yoga lacks (Malik, 2008). Additionally, there is a gap in the literature that relates to how school social workers are utilizing yoga to teach children regulation and self-awareness skills and tools. Although there has been research

to indicate benefits of yoga, the utility and consistency of how mental health professionals are using yoga with youth is lacking. The researcher will gain insight as to how school social workers are using yoga as an intervention for students who have an EBD. Additionally, the researcher will explore benefits, barriers, and challenges to the use of yoga as an intervention for youth at school. The purpose of this research study is to explore how school social workers are implementing yoga to help youth learn to self-regulate and increase mind-body awareness integration within the school system.

### **Literature Review**

The following review of literature outlines the current research relating to the practice of yoga with youth in schools. The literature exploration discusses the history and benefits of yoga as well as stressors and unique challenges that youth who have an EBD face in the school setting. Lastly, the literature review will seek to discover how yoga can be applied in schools to benefit youth who have an emotional or behavioral disorder from an integrative approach.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In order to discuss the use of yoga for youth who have an EBD it is vital to examine yoga through an integrative approach related to the profession of social work. An integrative approach to mental health targets the body, mind, and systems of the individual through looking at what needs to happen to build the capacity for behavioral change (Appeldoorn, 2014). In clinical social work, the integrative perspective focuses on maximizing an individual's functioning in relation to the psychological, physiological, and socioemotional areas with the person, with the aim being to bring wholeness together within all systems of a person (Copper & Lesser, 2012). A holistic approach to working



with youth who have an EBD could be an effective strategy in order to meet the unique needs of each child. The focus of the integrative approach is based on addressing the deepest roots behind mental health symptoms with a variety of treatment options involving natural methods when possible (Hurd, 2007). Alternative and integrated interventions may assist youth in addressing the needs for learning skills, for self-control, for self-esteem, and for building coping skills for dealing with stress (Hinkel, 2008).

The holistic approach refers to the healthcare philosophy in which the entire individual is evaluated and treated (Medical Dictionary Online, n.d.). In working with youth who have an EBD, this would entail integrating the whole child from the body to mind and environment (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). Children today face many challenges besides academic stressors that could include a history of trauma, diversity, the role of media, family dynamics and peer influence (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). Identifying the stressors that a child faces help create a direct link to the importance of a balanced education system to increase the interconnectedness of challenges that students face (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). An integrative approach focuses on building a cohesive interdisciplinary team through the collaboration of care for each student to address the bio-psycho-social areas of each person.

An integrative perspective to working with youth who have an EBD focuses on a team approach to address the various systems and stressors affecting each youth. Another focus of this approach is on the importance of the therapeutic alliance between the mental health professional and the client (Sierpina & Kreitzer, 2014). Establishing mutual trust and support within the team and the child is a crucial piece of the treatment processes to aid in helping meet the unique needs of each student effectively. Another essential

component of the integrative framework is on the whole person, while collaborating as a team to make an individualized plan for each child who has his or her own unique needs (Sierpina & Kreitzer, 2014).

In considering the education for youth who have an EBD, it is important to recognize the need for treatment to embody the whole individual. An integrative perspective also works to restore body balance and general well-being of the mind, body, spirit, and environment (Hurd, 2007). The naturalistic take on the integrative perspective encompasses the “whole picture” of the individual (Segal et, al, 1997).

Yoga embodies an integrative approach to working with youth who have an EBD as it addresses the whole individual from the mind, body, and spirit. Yoga has been shown to affect positively the biological, psychological, and spiritual aspects of the person through breath, postures, and relaxation. Various yoga-based movements combine the practice of the mind-body together to flow, breathe through difficult postures and release stress and tension within the body (Flaminio, 2014).

### **Defining Emotional/ Behavioral Disorders**

Emotional and behavior disorders can be thought of on a continuum, as each child presents various symptoms and are faced with different struggles (PACER Center for Children’s Mental Health and Emotional Behavioral Disorders, 2014). The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) defines emotional disturbances as:

...A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance:

(A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or

health factors.

(B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.

(C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.

(D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

(E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. (National Department of Education, 2014).

Youth who have an EBD face additional challenges and stressors in schools. One of the challenges includes the need for individualized interventions and support in school. Parents, teachers, mental health professionals, and other adults who interact with youth who have an EBD are aware of how challenging it can be to work effectively with each child or adolescent. Students who have an EBD often require intensive individual attention and work by support staff (Hotakainen, Smetanka, & Writers, 1994). In many instances, school staff that support youth who have an EBD must create innovative and individualized interventions that best meet the needs of each child (Rippey, 2008).

### **History of Yoga**

The word yoga means “union” or “reunion” relating to the unification of the mind, body, and spirit of an individual (Reevy, 2010). The history of yoga traces back to the sixth century BC in India, where the focus was on spiritual enlightenment (Reevy, 2010). Yoga came to the West in the 1800s and the focus in the United States was integrated and adapted to stretch relaxation, breath exercises, and flexibility, with little emphasis on spiritual enlightenment (Reevy, 2010). Yoga typically includes systematic

training in five areas including exercise, breathing, meditation and positive thinking, lifestyle, and relaxation (Gillen & Gillen, 2007).

According to a 2008 research study, around 15.8 million individuals in the United States practice yoga based on the improvement of health and overall well-being (Ruiz, 2008). Yoga practices that involve the mind-body connection such as guided imagery, postures, breath awareness, and mindfulness are commonly practiced activities in adults (Steiner et.al, 2013). Yoga-based movement and breath create optimal body performance by stretching the spine in six different directions (Flaminio, 2014). Prior to the 1990s, the focus of yoga was primarily adult-oriented until the growth of awareness of health benefits of yoga became known, and educators began to apply yoga to children or adolescents (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). The practice of bringing awareness to breath in yoga encourages the body to slow down and creates a balance between the mind and body (Henningsen, 2011).

### **Misperceptions of Yoga**

Yoga predates organized religions. The roots of yoga traces back 3,500 years, older than Hinduism (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). A misperception of the public is that yoga is a spiritual or religious practice and that may hinder its entrance into a school curriculum (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). Our culture has viewed yoga as a commonly practiced exercise by middle-upper class women in tight pants, contrary to the history of yoga. In spite of these misconceptions of yoga, Yoga Calm ® and other yoga curriculums aim to meet the needs of youth by focusing on awareness of both the physical and mental health benefits of yoga (Gillen & Gillen, 2007).

**Benefits of Yoga**

Past research confirms that yoga practices can indeed produce benefits in individuals (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). It has been shown that yoga in schools can be a positive intervention to help reduce anxiety and stress, foster healthier socioemotional development, and reduce disruptive behavior for youth in schools (Lance, 2011). Additionally, the use of breath awareness as well as the mind/body awareness has been shown to help children cope with stress (Lance, 2011). Mindful awareness refers to paying attention to the present moment without judgment to the way things are (Williams, 2007). The skills of yoga allow the ability to slow the mind and body down while one attempts to be in the present moment (Wainwright, 2012). The use of mindful awareness through yoga in a study of school-age female students was able to show the promotion of coping skills, decrease perceived levels of stress, enhance self-esteem, and self-regulation strategies (White, 2010).

Yoga has also been shown to help increase awareness of an individual's emotional state, which can promote relaxation and an increase in self-control (White, 2010). It is clear that improvements in coping skills can help decrease stressful discomfort or reactions both at school and at home (Lance, 2011). The integration of practicing yoga as a part of the school day could enhance the learning environment by providing support to students, teachers, and staff by connecting education to the overall well-being of students (Tubbs, 2008). In a pilot study that used yoga to promote an increase in self-esteem and weight management in adolescents, demonstrated improvements in self-concept and promotion of weight loss after using yoga for a 12-

week program (Benavides & Caballero, 2009). The increase in self-esteem in this trial was shown to be another potential benefit of yoga (Benavides & Caballero, 2009).

### **Physical Benefits of yoga**

Yoga activates the parasympathetic nervous system through diaphragmatic breathing and postures (Flaminio, 2014). Through yoga-based movement, levels of serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine are increased in the brain (Ratey, 2008). Yoga-based movements allows for regulation of essential functions within the brain and body such as the fight, flight, or freeze responses to occur in a person (Flaminio, 2014). Yoga can also help control innate reactions and impulses in the autonomic nervous system of the individual through the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system (Flaminio, 2014). Physical activity, such as through yoga-based movement, can ignite biological changes that promote brain cells to attach together (Ratey, 2008). Through engaging in biological changes that bind brain cells together, new pathways and organizational patterns are engraved in the mind (Siegel, 1999).

### **Yoga as a self-regulatory skill for youth**

The connection between the mind and body present in yoga can teach children coping skills that have been shown to decrease impulsivity during stressful situations for students at school or home (Steiner et.al, 2013). Yoga may be an effective alternative intervention to enable children or adolescents with a range of challenges to become aware of their emotions through mindfulness techniques (Steiner et.al, 2013). The school setting provides an opportunity for the delivery of yoga because youth spend six to seven hours of their weekdays at school (Steiner et.al, 2013).

In addition to the benefits yoga brings with increasing coping skills, it could also increase self-regulation skills in youth who have an EBD. The development of self-regulation skills refers to the ability for a child to manage his or her behaviors and emotions, an essential component of social progression (Malik, 2008). Another component of Yoga Calm ® embodies the development of pro-social skills lessons for youth which are included in the curriculum activity plans (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). The development of self-regulation is a skill young children can learn, although professionals did not always believe this (Eisenberg & Sulik, 2012). However, it is now understood that a child's ability to regulate his or her emotions emerges quickly during the child's toddler and preschool years (Eisenberg & Sulik, 2012). Students who have an EBD tend to become disorganized in stressful situations and could lack the ability to regulate internally (Eger, 2012).

Teachers and adults who are present in youths' lives can teach self-regulation skills through modeling behaviors, reinforcement, and opportunities for various attention-based activities (Eisenberg & Sulik, 2012). It can be especially challenging for youth who have an EBD to regulate his or her feelings when disorganized behaviors and thoughts may become intense or impulsive. Yoga programs for youth can promote self-regulation skills through the connection of the mind and body, while breathing techniques and calming exercises are incorporated into the practice (Eger, 2012).

The school setting can be a stressful environment for children, where the body may be bombarded with many stressors that can be challenging to manage and regulate (Henningsen, 2011). However, through yoga practice, breath awareness, and relaxation strategies, the body can become balanced and the individual can gain control of the body

(Henningsen, 2011). Through learning to self-regulate, youth who have an EBD could improve the ability to stay on task and reduce impulsivity or acting out in the classroom (Henningsen, 2011). Yoga can be an effective self-regulatory tool as it provides students with self-soothing resources including centering and calming, which could help students become balanced, and more emotionally regulated (Henningsen, 2011).

### **Stressors youth face in schools**

Children today face many stressors in life besides academics at school. Some of the stressors and challenges include home life, environmental factors, increasing rates of EBD, autism, obesity, mandates to increase standardized test scores, loss of physical education, music, dance in schools, and a decline in parent involvement in education (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). Hans Selye (1936) defined stressors as anything in the “outside world that can throw you off balance,”(Gillen & Gillen, p.22, 2007). The challenge relates to adults’ ability to teach students how to deal effectively with the many stressors they face in their day-to-day lives in a healthy manner. In addition to the academic demands children face, additional stressors could include family tension, homelessness, poverty, or trauma.

Youth who have an EBD face additional challenges in schools including the mainstreaming into classrooms, which increases the need for special adaptation of school staff and mental health professionals (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). Although youth who have an EBD face additional challenges, it is important that school staff create individualized interventions to support youth in the classroom.

The detrimental effect of chronic stress on youth may occur when the child or adolescent faces a set of challenging demands without the necessary coping skills, and in



turn may respond in a negative or harmful manner (Thoresen & Eagleston, 1983). The consequence of “miscooping” could produce an unhealthy response such as alcohol or drug abuse, social withdrawal, or truancy in schools (Thoresen & Eagleston, 1983). Stress in youth could have long-lasting negative implications on emotional and body development that may set the tone for unhealthy patterns of exploring the world (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). One of the greater challenges that professionals face while working with children or adolescents with stress could be understanding the many interconnected factors that influence psychosocial and physical health and illness in youth (Dufton, 2009).

### **Collaborative mental health in schools**

It is estimated that between 10%-20% of youth under the age of 18 have a mental health diagnosis and are in need of services to aid successful outcomes in schools (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). Due to the continuum of needs individualized for each child, a comprehensive and collaborative approach can be useful for interventions (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). From an integrative approach, mental health must be seen as both “promoting healthy development as one of the keys to preventing psychosocial and mental health problems and focusing on comprehensively addressing barriers to development and learning” (Adelman & Taylor, 2006, p. 295). A supportive environment for youth who have an EBD must involve both the school system as well as mental health professionals collaborating together to meet the needs for each child or adolescent (Reinke et. al, 2011).

In order to promote addressing mental health needs, it is vital to address each child or adolescent’s level of development, while focusing on simultaneous and

interconnected programs that meet the needs of each person (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). In providing a supportive environment, the interdisciplinary team must work together on each child or adolescent's specific case and needs (Reinke et.al, 2011). Another important piece of the integrated process of systems is addressing the need to increase coping skills in youth. School-based mental health services provide an excellent gate into targeting youth's mental health needs, academic success, and the importance of the link between the two (Reinke et.al, 2011). However, making the connection between the purpose of learning in schools, with the mental health needs of youth could help bridge the gaps between mental health systems and educational systems (Reinke et.al, 2011).

### **Role of a School Social Worker**

The school social worker plays a crucial role for many students' mental health needs in the school system. School social work has existed in the school system as a vibrant profession for over 100 years (Oxford Reference, 2008). School social workers are often experienced in culturally aware interventions, and individual and group work, as well as evidence-based practices (Alvarez et. al, 2013). The role of the school social worker can be thought of as the central link for students between school, home, and community (Oxford Reference, 2008). School social workers often act as a positive adult figure in students' educational experience through reciprocal interactions, mental health services, and evidence-based interventions with students (Alvarez et.al, 2013).

Additionally, school social workers must be trained to work with individuals, groups, families, and larger systems (Berzin & O'Connor, 2010). Due to the fact that there is a large increase in mental health diagnoses of students, social work practice in schools is a vital service for students with mental health concerns (Berzin & O'Connor,

2010). The school social worker is able to provide mental health services for students who have an EBD. Since there are varied roles and demands of a school social worker, integrating yoga with students could be an additional challenge. The school setting gives an opportunity to learn new experiences and could allow for regular access to yoga practices with the school social worker, as well as bringing skills and tools learned into their daily home lives (Holland, 2012).

### **Literature Analysis**

Through a review of the literature relating to practicing yoga with youth as an intervention in the school system, it was found that there was a noticeable lack of methodology that school social workers can utilize for yoga. An additional gap in the literature stems from how to cater and adapt yoga activities and exercises to the needs and developmental of the participants. Although the school social worker has many various roles and responsibilities, implementing yoga with youth who have an EBD could be an effective intervention. The research study will aim to understand further the benefits, challenges, and implementation of utilizing yoga in schools to foster positive outcomes for students who have an EBD. The researcher will interview school social workers to determine the use of yoga as an intervention for youth who have an EBD in the school setting.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

Through exploring the literature, it can be noted that the current research is supporting yoga as a positive benefit to increasing self-regulation, self-esteem, and coping skills (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). However, the research relating to examining the

use of yoga with youth who have an EBD is lacking. The purpose of this research project is to highlight how school social workers are using yoga to work with youth who have an EBD. This research project was qualitative in design and used a sampling of school social workers in Minnesota.

The qualitative design fits well with the research method as it focused on gathering data from the insider perspective of school social workers (Padgett, 2008). The benefits of using a qualitative design address the integrative approach to the research as it provided a holistic look at in-depth questions with participants (Padgett, 2008). The researcher gained direct insight from clinicians that are using yoga with children or adolescents in the school setting. A qualitative research design was chosen for hope of explorative and face-to-face conversations regarding the implementation of using yoga in schools for youth who have an EBD. In order to gather the data needed for this research study, the researcher conducted interviews with voluntary participants. Further information about recruitment and interview questions can be found in Appendices A&B.

### **Population and sample**

The sample for this study included school social workers who utilize yoga as an intervention for youth who have an EBD from Minnesota school districts. Seven school social workers were interviewed. The school social workers that participated in the study were selected using the Minnesota School Social Work Association (MSSWA) email list-serve. The recruitment email indicated details of the study, including recruiting clinicians that use yoga in the school setting. MSSWA members that received the recruitment email also forwarded the email onto colleagues, who then contacted to the researcher. Word of mouth from MSSWA members of the research project helped the recruitment process in

gaining additional participants. Seven participants were involved in the research study from Minnesota. The interviewees ranged in years of using yoga in the school setting from two years to seven years. All of the participants were female school social workers.

In an attempt to ensure that interviewees would fit the sampling requirements, the researcher screened potential participants. The researcher spoke with potential participants before scheduling an interview date to ensure they were using yoga as an intervention for students who have an EBD. In addition to screening participants, the researcher followed the outline of the interview questions to create consistency among the interviews.

### **Participants**

The participants in the study all currently work as school social workers with youth who have an EBD. While credentials, years of experience, and use of yoga in their practice varied, the use of yoga, as an intervention in the schools, was consistent among participants. The researcher made efforts to include a range of age, ethnicity, and gender in the interview sample; however, lack of diversity of Minnesota school social workers that participated in the research study limited the chance of wide-ranging participants. The participants consisted of six female school social workers within the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area, and one school social worker from rural Minnesota. All participants in the study were Caucasian females.

Of the seven professionals interviewed in this study, one is currently an MSW social work intern through the University of Minnesota social work program, one is a licensed social worker (LSW), one is a licensed graduate social worker (LGSW), and four currently are licensed independent clinical social workers (LICSW). There was a

large range in years as a school social worker among the participants from less than one year- twenty-five years. Three of the participants are elementary school social workers; one is a middle school rural social worker; two are school social workers in a Level IV Special Education school settings for elementary children and one is a social worker at a Level IV Special Education middle and high school combined. Two of the participants were going through yoga teacher training in order to become a registered yoga teacher (RYT).

### **Data Collection/ Procedures**

Once the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the research study, and participant consent was obtained, data for the study was collected through utilizing a semi-structured interview format (Berg, 2009). The interviews were recorded using a digital recording device that was later transcribed by the researcher. Six of the interviews were carried out in the participants' offices, to ensure confidentiality. One of the interviews was conducted through Skype, since the participant is a rural social worker. The interview format consisted of a set of questions created by the researcher that began generally with the role of the school social worker then explored the use of yoga as a possible intervention with youth who have an EBD.

The questions were developed as a result of information from the literature and addressed the various aspects of benefits of youth yoga and how school social workers are implementing yoga in schools. Prior to the interviews, fellow researchers and research committee members assessed the questions to ensure they would be interpreted as intended. The set of interview questions were designed to provide reliability by utilizing language that would be easily interpreted by the various interviewees and would address

the primary research question (Monette, Sullivan, DeJong & Hilton, 2013). Reliability was apparent in the research questions due to the fact that they questions were stated in clear terms that could be interpreted by the general public as well as by social workers. Considering both reliability and validity, the research questions were specific and could be readily understood by the general public (Monette, Sullivan, DeJong, & Hilton, 2013).

The questions began generally, exploring the role of the school social worker's practice with youth who have an EBD and the prevalence of EBD in each school. Next, questions were asked about how yoga is carried out in schools. Then, the questions explored negative and positive aspects of using yoga with children with an emotional or behavioral disorder from the social worker's perspective. Interviews concluded by asking questions about implementation and suggestions for social workers to help use yoga in schools with youth who have an EBD.

The questions appeared as follows:

1. How long have you been a school social worker and what is your current licensure level?
2. As of a school social worker, can you tell me about your work with students that have an emotional/behavioral disorder?
3. About what percentage on your caseload are students with an emotional/behavioral disorder?
4. How do you define yoga to students?
5. Who participates (grade levels) in yoga programs in the school setting?
6. How do you introduce/implement yoga with your students?
7. How have families of EBD students responded to yoga in schools?

- a. How did you respond to concerns raised by families?
- 8. How long have you been using yoga in school with students?
- 9. Describe how you use yoga with students in your practice.
  - a. Ex: Group work, whole class lesson, individual session
- 10. What type of yoga curriculum or program do you implement with your students?
- 11. How have kids responded to participating in yoga?
- 12. What benefits do you think youth with an EBD gain from participating in yoga?
- 13. What are some challenges to using yoga with youth with an?
- 14. Do you have any suggestions for other school social workers that are looking to add in yoga as a possible intervention for students with an EBD?

### **Protection of human subjects**

There did not appear to be any risks for participants involved in the research study. However, if any participant was uncomfortable with participating he or she was able to choose to end the interview at anytime. All participants decided that they were comfortable with the interview and none of the participants chose to end the interview.

The researcher used a template provided by the University of St. Thomas for the consent form that was tailored to the research design, which included background information and the purpose of the study (See Appendix A). The forms consisted of a description of the research project and research question, procedures for the interview, confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participating in the research project. Prior to the interviews, the researcher gave the participants the list of questions that they would be asked in the interview to ensure they were comfortable with participating in the study.



When the interviews began, the researcher reviewed the consent form with the participant and informed participants that their participation is voluntary.

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher discussed the consent form and asked participants open-ended questions to ensure that the participants understood the purpose of the study. The researcher also made sure that participants were aware that their responses would remain confidential. The research ensured that participants were aware that if they decided to participate, their participation would be completely voluntary and all data would remain confidential. The researcher informed the human subjects that the interviews would be recorded, and then coded in order to determine common themes from the interviews. The researcher also informed participants that all responses would remain confidential and anonymous in the paper and the recordings will be discarded by April 30, 2015.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis of the transcriptions was carried out as the systematic way of examining and interpreting the data to find emerging themes and patterns (Berg, 2009). Concepts that emerged from the transcript were then noted, or coded, next to the text to discuss patterns. Reoccurring codes that were present in the transcript were then grouped into themes. The transcript was then reviewed again to ensure that all codes corresponding to the research question were addressed by the themes that had been determined.

### **Researcher Biases**

As the researcher, it was vital to address personal biases to be mindful of throughout the interview, transcribing, and coding processes. The researcher practices

yoga, which could increase the likelihood of a positive viewpoint of the topic and its results. It was important that the researcher remained self-aware of personal bias and put all biases aside during the interview and data analysis processes. Another potential bias could be that selecting participants that practice yoga with students or on their own could lead to positively skewed results.

### **Findings**

All seven interviews were conducted and later transcribed. Following the transcription process, coding for patterns and themes were identified. The findings section will inform the reader of the participants' backgrounds and will be followed by a presentation of the personal definition of yoga by each of the participants. Finally, the six themes identified in the research will be presented. The themes consisted of normalizing yoga, benefits, yoga curriculum, feedback, barriers, and suggestions.

### **Defining Yoga**

All participants were asked to provide their own definition of yoga, as they explain and define it to students in the school setting. Many of the participants stated that the students had a preconceived idea of what yoga was, relating to how it is viewed within our culture. Three of the social workers stated they explain it as a tool for youth who have an EBD to utilize to calm down his or her mind and body. Five of the social workers included the importance of breathing and breath in their definitions of yoga. Participant one defined yoga as:

*I just call it yoga and I haven't really had any push back about that. But basically I tell them it's a lot of the breathing, stillness, and postures.... So just some*

*stretches that are good for your mind and something that helps your body get ready for learning. (Participant One)*

Participant two described yoga as:

*We explain it as a way to help them control their bodies and that its another tool they can use when their body is getting out of control. And it is all about tricking their body into being calm, that's how I explain it to my kindergarteners-its all about the breathing- we go over the breathing so many times and tell them the next time they are getting stressing out you can use deep breathing to help your body become calm even though you are not. (Participant Two)*

Participant three defined yoga to students as:

*...So we talk to them about teaching your mind and body to be calm...I think a lot of these kids have a preconceived notion of what yoga is, so right now we are teaching the basic steps of yoga like laying on your back and using guided meditation through scripts. So we explain yoga as connecting your mind and body together to be calm. We explain that yoga is not always about doing poses, but also about being mindful like thinking about thinking, about the thoughts you have. (Participant Three)*

Participant four's definition:

*..It has kind of evolved with time depending on the group actually...so I don't always use the terminology of yoga instead I might call it "body movement" or things like that or "lets do some stress relieving" which some kids like and they call it "yoga group." Our group has kind of evolved to be called "Mindful Movement" ....so now I try to get them to think about it more of mindfulness*

*training, which is such a key word right now in therapy so trying to get them to understand its about paying attention to their body and calming it down through becoming more aware. (Participant Four)*

Participant five defined yoga as:

*It's funny because I ask kids what they know about yoga and they just go into lotus pose or say "ohmmm" so they have picked up images they are getting from TV and movies and stuff. But I just talk to them about how it is movement and it's really good for their body and especially the breathing. (Participant Five)*

Participant six's definition:

*We define it as a technique to use your body to calm down (to younger students). We also talk about it as a healthy, fun, and easy exercise that helps control your emotions, stress level, and overall well being. (Participant Six)*

Participant seven defines yoga as:

*Well that was an interesting question to me because most kids have some idea of what yoga is-all middle schoolers wear is yoga pants! So I guess I just try and keep it simple and say its stretching the body and quieting the mind. (Participant Seven)*

### **Normalizing Yoga**

Several of the participants discussed the importance of normalizing yoga and catering it to youth who have an EBD in order to get their buy in or acceptance for participating in yoga. Two of the participants described innovative ways to get investment into trying yoga with their students who have an EBD. Three of the participants discussed students coming in with an understanding of yoga from what the

media depicts the images of yoga as. For example, one of the participants discussed how the media portrays the culture of yoga as Caucasian women in tight pants that say “ohm”. Participant Two discussed some drawback to yoga from media portrayal *..but if we say we are going to do “yoga” to the fourth grade boys, they will not participate because it is called yoga so we hang posters to help show them the postures*. Similarly, Participant Four discussed...*I had this African American boy be like “I’m black I don’t do yoga” so I do not always use the terminology*. The theme of normalizing yoga became known as participants spoke to ensuring youth understand yoga and have the choice to participate. Participants also discussed the importance of introducing and implementing yoga in a simple way to gain investment in participating in yoga.

**Catering to the group.** In order to normalize yoga and present it in a different way than how the media portrays it, three of the participants explained catering the yoga to the needs of the group in order to depict a different image than how yoga is portrayed with the stereotypical white upper-class female in tight pants. This subtheme emerged as participants discussed the need to meet the individual or group where they are at depending on the day, energy levels, and matching the activity to the individual group members.

*..I am always catering to the group and gearing it toward them so it can be different each week depending on their energy level...I usually start each group with a little PowerPoint because we have Smartboards in our group room, so I try to normalize it at first because there is a lot of misconception about what it is so I tell them that you do not have to do headstands or be super flexible because we have a large population of students that are overweight or obese due to being on*

*psychotropic medications with a lot of side effects of poor nutrition from living in an unsafe neighborhood...So I'll even do other things to normalize it like showing famous athletes doing yoga and so that way I can kind of sell it like its not just these cute white girls in tight pants. I try to normalize it and cater it to really sell it as another skill you can use to calm your body. (Participant Four)*

Similarly, another of the participants described the importance of normalizing yoga and explaining it to students in a way to get their investment for participation in the group.

*I started using a YouTube video, so they can watch (yoga) on the Smartboard and I walk them through it...part of it is with the middle school age they are very self conscious and might look at me like "I'm too cool for this" so I don't force them to participate but try to let them watch it first since it takes awhile for them to get comfortable...you know it's hard and so is mind-body awareness. (Participant Seven)*

Lastly, one of the participant described catering the group based on their grade and energy levels.

*...How I introduce it depends on what I am using it for. I have done it with the kindergarteners where they can sometimes get easily out of control with their behavior, or get very excited so we have done some guided meditations or fun yoga songs that have movement with them. So, I guess I always just tell the kids that it is a way to wake yourself up if you're tired and calm yourself down if you are upset. It kind of brings you to a good/happy place. (Participant One)*

## Benefits

All participants described the benefits of yoga as an intervention with students who have an EBD. All seven of the participants described yoga as another tool to teach the children to use when dealing with times of stress, anger, anxiety, etc. Participants discussed the importance of teaching the students who have an EBD the importance of self-regulation through breath and relaxation skills.

**Self-Regulation.** Self-regulation emerged as a subtheme relating to the benefits of yoga throughout the interviews by six out of the seven participants. Participants described how yoga could give students who have an EBD another tool to try to regulate them. Deep breathing and mindfulness exercises were also common tools described by the participants to teach students self-regulation.

*Yoga gives them a different avenue to do any type of relaxation. Sometimes for these kids a 5-point scale isn't going to be where they are at or just teaching them what relaxed is-these kids don't even know what relaxed means so I think that is a huge benefit. So they have a baseline and get basic skills-I hope that is what they'll get out of it (yoga). (Participant Three)*

Another participant described how teaching kids to calm down could help in times of distress.

*I think students can learn self-regulation skills from yoga in which they can become more familiar with their bodies and how their bodies respond to stress. (Participant Six)*

*...I would say probably the biggest benefit is self-regulation- like being able to calm them down when they are angry or anxious or upset. I would say that if they*

*are feeling really lethargic or tired they could try yoga to become more attentive.*

*(Participant One)*

Likewise, participant five described increasing self-regulation through yoga and deep breathing to utilize in times of crisis.

*I think a lot of it is the body control-sort of understanding that they have control over their bodies. I have my younger kids run around and then we do deep breathing and calming poses so that they can feel their heart rate go down. ... So many of the kids get stuck when they are in a crisis and we will have them come here and do the balloon deep breathing or some yoga poses so they can start to learn to self-regulate and get in-tune with their bodies. (Participant Five)*

**Mind-Body Awareness.** Another subtheme that emerged from the benefits of yoga described by the participants was mind-body awareness. Four of the participants discussed how yoga could help teach youth who have an EBD to become more present and aware of how their mind and thinking affects their body and reactions. Participants described how many of students who have an EBD do not feel the mind-body connection and yoga could help increase awareness and being present in the moment.

*...Slowing down and relaxing and being in the moment and being in touch with their body and how they are feeling is a huge benefit as many of the kids are on medications which makes their body and their minds do different things. So I think its just being aware-being aware of your mind, your body, and your self and just relaxing. I think it is maybe more difficult for these kids but can definitely benefit them. (Participant Seven)*



Likewise, awareness of stress and how yoga can make you aware of how your mind and body are connected was discussed.

*...So last year I was really new at this and I had some little girl tell me that she was really mad at her sister so she went into her room and did some volcano deep breaths and let her anger out and I was like wow! That is so cool- so bringing the yoga home and they're actually using it so that is a huge benefit. (Participant Five)*

Lastly, one of the participants described how teaching yoga as a skill for mind-body awareness can teach youth to calm themselves down by paying attention to how they are feeling in the present moment.

*...I just really think it is important for them to learn to listen to their body so instead of being in the limbic system of the brain, they kind of calm their body and have these skills, So many staff members get upset when they act out and say to calm down but they may not know how to calm down- so we have to give them skills. I think by having them practice mindfulness-training skills little by little and repeating I have seen them gain some skills. (Participant Three)*

### **Yoga Curriculum**

The participants all had different styles of yoga and activities they implement with students however Yoga Calm® curriculum was a common theme throughout the interviews. Yogarilla and MindUp were two other yoga activities/curriculums that were spoken about during the interviews conducted. Participants described Yoga Calm® as an adaptable program to use in the school settings as the activities are designed to be used in schools. *We use Yoga Calm® and Yogarilla with our students, Yogarilla puts the poses*

*more into child-friendly terms and the curriculum is a gorilla doing yoga. (Participant Three) Similarly, We use Yoga Calm® with our students (Participant Six). Another participant described using yoga calm, I just use the Yoga Calm® and I use things from Mind Up Curriculum but I pretty much stick right to Yoga Calm®- keep it simple. (Participant Four)*

### **Feedback**

Participants discussed how youth who have an EBD and their families have responded to yoga as an intervention in the school setting. Only one of the participants had concerns raised by a parent worried that the yoga was religion or spiritually-based. Across the board, it seems that the responses by students are of varying degrees. The importance of normalizing the yoga and catering to the group was described as enhancing responses and participation in yoga.

*...I would say 95% of kids loved it (yoga). There have been one or two students who have refused to participate and that was mostly in whole class lessons. ...I asked one of the students why they didn't try it and he said that he didn't want his friends to laugh at him. I said just like any skill it takes practice to get good at it. (Participant One)*

One of the participants stated how her students did not originally like yoga but through completing more activities on it, they grew to enjoy it.

*I think originally they didn't like it so we talked about how yoga is connecting your mind and body and making them calm. So last week we tried a mindfulness eating exercise with dark chocolate, it was about stress and eating dark chocolate to help calm down, so incorporating things like that makes it more tangible which*

*they really like. If I incorporate things they like or make it more personal for them they seem to really like it. (Participant Three)*

Lastly, one of the participants discussed the reality that some of her students enjoyed it while others did not, but reinforced adapting yoga to the group.

*The little kids love the breathing, ..but the older boys don't want to do it. Some kids love the breathing and the chime and if I do it as a Simon Says game, they will participate more. But, so often their bodies are too squirrely and it is hard to get their bodies to calm down. When I tell them to do volcano breath there is some disconnect so I think it might work better with the older kids as they have more body control.*

*(Participant Five)*

## **Barriers**

Although all seven of the participants described yoga as a positive intervention with students who have an EBD, barriers to implementing the yoga in schools emerged as a theme. Several of the participants discussed the challenges within the school system with the pressures of testing, curriculum, and general lack of time in the day to add in yoga. Two of the participants described refusal from older students being self-conscious or thinking they were “too cool”

*We see refusal in our older students, probably because they don't think it's “cool,” or someone has put the idea in their head that it won't work. (Participant Six)*

Two of the participants discussed the difficulty of getting the students who have an EBD to invest in the yoga and participation can be an added challenge.

*I think the buy in for some of the kids has been difficult since some of the kids know that if they participate in group they will get a reward at the end so they might just go through the motions and not really get anything out of it which has been kind of difficult. (Participant Three)*

*I guess the buy in can be hard too-getting them to think its important and good for them can be challenging. (Participant Seven)*

Access to resources needed to implement yoga was also a barrier described by the participants. Some of the resources needed were mats, a place to practice yoga, and time. *Time, place, and mats are a huge challenge. (Participant Five)* The participants described several other ideas relating to barriers of using yoga in the school setting listed below.

*Well, probably the biggest challenge is time, because teachers feel so pressured to teach all of the curriculum and its really hard for the older grades to miss out on their specialized classes. So the only down time is lunch and recess and they want to spend that with their friends. So I think there is buy in, interest, its just a matter of time....If we can show the teachers that these skills can help their math scores, its just finding the time to do it and making it more systematic. (Participant One)*

Another participant discussed limited space available as another barrier to implementing yoga as a possible intervention with students who have an EBD.

*Our space is just limited- I would love to have a room that is darker and that I could draw the shades on and have music-it's a little more calming, which has been an obstacle. (Participant Three)*

## Suggestions

Lastly, the theme of suggestions arose as all seven of the participants discussed suggestions for school social workers that are looking to add in yoga as an intervention for youth who have an EBD. All participants described the benefits of yoga as an intervention for school social workers to utilize in the school setting. Four of the seven participants suggested attending a conference or workshop relating to yoga as an intervention in the school or a Yoga Calm® local conference. Participants described attending conferences as a way to gain knowledge and an understanding of how to adapt and integrate yoga into the school setting. Additionally, participants suggested that social workers that may be looking to add in yoga as an intervention, could try out a yoga class on their own in order to gain some confidence and knowledge about using yoga as an intervention. *I would say of course go to some trainings, practice it yourself, have a firm understanding of it, have some confidence, and understanding because you don't want to cause an injuries so start slow. (Participant Four)*

*I would say go to a Yoga Calm® workshop, take a yoga class yourself..I think just starting with a strong personal practice then getting the information from Yoga Calm® is beneficial as it is not just physical poses but it (yoga) is really the community building incorporated with the principles of Yoga Calm® including the listening, strength, community, stillness, grounding. (Participant One)*

Another participant echoed the idea of attending a workshop such as Yoga Calm®

*I think that it is really important to have a speaker, such as from Yoga Calm® come into the school and do a staff development for the school so that the teachers and staff really hear the benefits of it (yoga) and get the buy in rather*

*than think of it as one more thing or more prep time and paperwork for the teachers to try.... Going over the whole picture of benefits- we are really seeing a change from kids being just medicated to parents looking at alternatives, like the oils and integrative. I think as school social workers we are supposed to be role models for self-care and keeping ourselves balanced and healthy both professionally and personally. (Participant Seven)*

### **Discussion**

The research findings indicated similar findings as is cited in the literature, that yoga is indeed a positive alternative intervention to utilize with youth who have an EBD. The discussion will focus on connecting the research findings to the literature review as it applies to the original research question: how school social workers are implementing yoga with students diagnosed with an emotional or behavioral disorder. The researcher indentified six themes that review the findings from all seven qualitative interviews as well as speak to implications for future social work practice and research.

### **Defining Yoga**

Although the historic definition as reviewed in the literature describes yoga as the “union” or to “unite” the mind, body and spirit, participants had a slightly more concrete way of defining yoga to youth (Revy, 2010). A common theme that arose from the interviews was defining yoga as way to calm the body and the mind.

The researcher asked participants if there had been any concerns brought forth relating to spirituality or religion with using yoga in the school setting. The research states that yoga actually predates organized religion (Flaminio, 2014). Participants stated

that they had not had significant concerns from families regarding the use of yoga as an intervention in schools.

### **Benefits: Self- Regulation and Mind-body Awareness**

The theme of benefits was explored based on the literature that pointed to yoga as a valuable tool for teaching youth self-regulation and increasing mind-body awareness (Steiner et.al, 2013). All participants spoke to noticing the benefits that yoga brings to youth, such as the ability to help students who have an EBD increase their ability to self-regulate during times of stress or anxiety. Additionally, the participants described mind-body connectedness as a way the tool of yoga may increase their understanding that the students have the ability to control their emotions and their bodies. The literature described how yoga could be an alternative intervention to help students deal with stressors and challenges through becoming aware of their emotions (Steiner et.al, 2013).

### **Yoga Curriculum**

The qualitative interviews had a common theme of utilizing Yoga Calm® as the main curriculum for youth yoga in the school system, as was stated in the research (Gillen & Gillen, 2007). Gillen & Gillen (2007), creators of Yoga Calm® speak to the importance of breath and movement as the stem of their yoga curriculum. Participants also spoke to utilizing Yoga Calm® in the school as it is geared toward youth and incorporates the importance of the breath and exercises as well as building a strong community within the school system. MindUp and Yogarilla were other yoga curriculums discussed that was not cited in the literature as reviewed by this researcher.

**Suggestions**

The literature on suggestions for social workers looking to add in yoga as an intervention lacks however, participants discussed the importance of a personal yoga practice as well as attending a workshop or conference on yoga in the schools. Another interesting thought that several participants spoke to was getting the buy in from other school staff to try yoga with the whole class. Lack of time during the school day to incorporate yoga was another barrier brought forth in the interviews.

One of the participants spoke to the need to make yoga more systematic in the setting versus using it sporadically with students. She discussed the importance of incorporating yoga into each youth's day to enhance the principles of the breath and movement of yoga. Although schools are bombarded with lists of required class and activities, the benefits of yoga have been shown to be positive. The importance of educating staff on yoga could yield benefits for students in the school.

**Implications for Social Work Practice and Further Research**

There are several implications for social work practice, based on the research findings. The following section explores how the findings suggest implications for further research, social work practice, and policy relating to the use of yoga with youth. Further research needs to be conducted to discover how to adapt and cater yoga to youth in order to develop a systematic approach to the intervention. Although several programs and curriculums were discussed in the interviews, it would be vital for additional research to be conducted to explore other youth yoga curriculum that could be a beneficial intervention.



Normalizing yoga with youth in addition to altering various yoga activities to meet the needs of the group was a theme that arose throughout the interviews. The findings suggested the importance of constantly adapting the yoga activities to cater to the individual or group's energy levels, developmental age appropriateness, and ability various poses and activities. As the research has shown benefits for the use of yoga for youth who have an emotional/behavioral disorders, it would be interesting to further explore how to use it in other settings, such as in psychotherapy with youth.

### **Implications for Social Work Policy**

Through the findings concluded in the research, it is clear that the need for innovative and individualized interventions are crucial to aid in supporting youth with an emotional or behavioral disorder. It is vital that school social workers continue to advocate for the needs for youth who have an EBD that bring awareness to the need for specialized support at school. With the occurrence of budget cuts in schools relating to specialized education and paraprofessional support in the classroom, it is important that school social workers continue to advocate for youth who have an EBD, as the need for support for these students is crucial.

### **Limitations**

There were both strengths and limitations to this research study. Some limitations of the research study included lack of previous research relating to the use of yoga by school social workers, minimal diversity among research participants, and small sample size of participants. Another possible limitations of yoga being utilized could include the fact that some individuals may not have access to funds or yoga facilities, which could be

a barrier for some school districts to utilize yoga. Some school districts could lack the funding or facilitators to provide yoga in the schools.

Although yoga has been used for thousands of years, the research on the use of yoga with youth who have an emotional and behavioral disorder is relatively new. As Yoga Calm® and other programs emerge, further research would need to be conducted in order to compile findings relating to the implementation and the benefits of yoga as intervention in the school for youth who have an EBD.

Another limitation to the research study included minimal diversity among research participants, as all were Caucasian female school social workers. Due to the nature of the project, the sample size of participants was limited and the findings could not be generalized. The recruitment method of using the Minnesota School Social Work Association intended to gain multiple perspectives from a wide range of potential participants. Potentially, yoga is more commonly used by female social workers however it would have been beneficial to hear how men, for example are utilizing yoga as an intervention in the schools. Unfortunately, due to several factors including lack of response in recruiting for the research study or the reality that yoga with youth is still relatively new, the sample size for the research was small. Despite the fact that the sample size was small, the data collected was rich and themes emerged from the data, the findings indicate further research should be conducted relating to yoga as an intervention in the schools.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, exploring how yoga is being utilized in the school as an intervention with youth who have an EBD brought forth an interesting integrative

approach to mental health support by school social workers. The researcher's own experiences with yoga may have influenced the type of questions asked and the themes that emerged from the findings. Holistic approaches to mental health have become increasingly popular, as they have helped people lead balanced and healthy lives.

Findings for this research along with the literature suggest that the benefits of yoga as an intervention to aid in self-regulatory skills as well as mind-body awareness have been empirically supported. With the increase in integrative approaches to mental health, we could obtain valuable information about how to best implement yoga for youth in the school setting. Although further research needs to be conducted in order to explore yoga as an intervention, it appears that it may be a potential innovative strategy to use for youth who have an EBD.

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## Appendix A

# CONSENT FORM UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

### **School- Based Yoga for Students with an Emotional/ Behavioral Disorder**

IRB Tracking Number: 687480-1

I am conducting a study about the use of yoga as an intervention in schools for students with emotional/ behavioral disorders by school social workers. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a social worker practicing in a school setting that uses yoga with students. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Rachel Coates, a graduate student at the School of Social Work, Catherine University/University of St. Thomas and supervised by Dr. Kendra Garrett, from the University of St. Thomas.

The purpose of this study is to explore how yoga is used in the school setting for students with emotional/behavioral disorders by school social workers. Current research has shown yoga to be a positive intervention for self-regulation, increasing coping skills, socio/emotional development, and increasing self-esteem. However, research is lacking on how school social workers are implementing yoga in the school setting with students with emotional/behavioral disorders.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: participate in a semi-structured interview of 45-60 minutes; allow me to audio tape the interview; permit presentation of data gathered to the public on May 18, 2015.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

The study has no anticipated risks.

The study has no direct benefits.

#### **Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The types of records I will create include consent forms, audio recordings and transcripts. Research records will be kept in a locked file. I will also keep the electronic copy of the transcript in a password-

protected file on my computer. Audio recordings and transcripts will be destroyed by April 30, 2015. Consent forms will be kept for up a minimum of three years after the completion of the study.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations MSSWA or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw one week after the interview. If you decide to withdraw from the study, please contact me either through email or by telephone and I will destroy all information collected from the interview. Should you decide to withdraw data collected about you, I will not use any data collected from you. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask. If you chose to skip a question, I may ask you to include a rationale for these exceptions.

**Contacts and Questions**

My name is Rachel Coates. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 952-250-4615. You may also contact my advisor, Kendra Garrett at [KJGARRETT@stthomas.edu](mailto:KJGARRETT@stthomas.edu) or 651-962-5808. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-6038 with any questions or concerns.

**You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.**

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I agree to an audio recording of the interview that will be deleted by April 30, 2015. I am at least 18 years of age.

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**Signature of Study Participant**

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**Date**

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**Print Name of Study Participant**

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**Signature of Researcher**

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**Date**

**Appendix B**  
Interview Questions:

1. How long have you been a school social worker and what is your current licensure level?
2. As of a school social worker, can you tell me about your work with students that have an emotional/behavioral disorder? ‘
3. About what percentage of caseload are students with an emotional/behavioral disorder?
4. How do you define yoga to students?
5. Who participates (grade levels) in yoga programs in the school setting?
6. How do you introduce/implement yoga with your students?
7. How have families of EBD students responded to yoga in schools?
8. How long have you been using yoga in school with students?
9. Describe how you use yoga with students in your practice.
10. What type of yoga curriculum or program do you implement with your students?
11. How have kids responded to participating in yoga?
12. What benefits do you think children with EBD gain from participating in yoga?
13. What are some challenges to using yoga with students with EBD?
14. Do you have any suggestions for other school social workers that are looking to add in yoga as a possible intervention for students with EBD?

**Appendix C**  
Recruitment Flyer:

Dear MSSWA Members,

**Are you currently using yoga with students with emotional/ behavioral disorders?**

My name is Rachel Coates and I am currently in the MSW program at the University of St. Thomas/ St. Catherine University. I am completing my research project on school-based yoga for students with emotional/behavioral disorders. The purpose of the study is to explore how school social workers are using yoga as an intervention for students with emotional/behavioral disorders.

Participation in the study would include:

- A time commitment of 1 interview lasting between 45 minutes- 1 hour, consisting of qualitative questions
- The interview will be audio-recorded and will remain confidential in any publication
- 

There are no risks involved in the study and there will be no impact on your relationship to the University of St. Thomas or St. Catherine University should you chose to participate or not.

For more information about the study, please contact the principal investigator, Rachel Coates by phone or by email at [coat2829@stthomas.edu](mailto:coat2829@stthomas.edu)

Thank you,  
Rachel Coates